Special 8-Page Issue on That New Berlin "Crisis"

How A Coincidence Strangely Like The U-2 Affair Upset A Detente and Brought Us Close to the Brink Again

I. F. Stone's Bi-Weekly

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The Hidden History of the Incidents on the Autobahn

The peculiar thing about the recent incidents on the Berlin autobahn was the date on which they began. This was October 10. But for these incidents, it would have been a red letter day for peace. On October 10, representatives of the U.S., Britain and the Soviet Union deposited at the State Department the diplomatic instruments formally ratifying the nuclear test ban treaty. From Moscow that day Premier Khrushchev sent messages to President Kennedy and Prime Minister Macmillan saying the treaty showed that the most complicated problems could be solved even by nations of differing social systems if they had a genuine desire to do so. In Washington on October 10 the President sent Congress a message defending the sale of wheat to the Soviet Union. And at the White House, as if to dramatize the change in atmosphere, the President held his first meeting with Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko since their conference of bitter memory on the eve of the Cuban missile crisis one year earlier. The stage seemed set at last for substantial progress toward peace.

Just in Time to Upset The Thaw

Then, as if maleficent forces were at work, just as Secretary of State Rusk was preparing to leave the State Department for the scheduled meeting at the White House with Gromyko, word was rushed to him that the Russians had held up two U.S. military convoys on the Berlin autobahn and were refusing to let them proceed unless the troops dismounted for a head count. The incident was as if made to order for the enemies of peace. The New York *Herald-Tribune* underscored the point in page one headlines next morning, "Irony of Kennedy-Gromyko Talks—First Cuba; Now A Berlin 'Incident'." *Time* magazine (Oct. 18) said "For once, talk about a thaw in the cold war seemed realistic. And then, for some mysterious reason that would require a Communist mind to unravel, the Russians deliberately tried to unthaw the thaw." This was characteristic of how the press handled the story from there on in. But even the meagre facts provided in the first news dispatches from Germany indicated a good deal of on-the-spot confusion as to just what the proper procedure for checking U.S. convoys was. If the reporters were confused, it was not impossible that the Russians at the checkpoints were, too.

The UPI from Berlin (*Washington Daily News,* Oct. 11) said the Army insisted the Russians had no right to make U.S. troops dismount for a head count "and said the soldiers could be counted in the vehicles, as is the usual procedure." On the other hand, an Associated Press dispatch from Berlin the same day (*Washington Post,* Oct. 11) said "When unusually large numbers of troops are being carried in convoys, they sometimes dismount to be counted by the Russians." The AP added, however, that "the Western Allies feel that dismounting for border checks is a 'courtesy' and not a procedure that must be followed at all times."

But then it turned out, after the convoy had been released only to be held up a second time at the other end of the autobahn several hours later, that the Russians not only were unaware of this supposed U.S. regulation but had deliberately been kept in the dark about it. A later Associated Press dispatch (*York, Pa., Gazette & Daily,* Oct. 14) quoted "high administration sources" as giving "this assessment of the convoy incident: The Russians apparently thought the 18-vehicle U.S. convoy carrying 61 men and supplies was varying from customary procedures. The U.S., for its part, has kept its exact operational procedures on the Berlin route a secret because it maintains there should be no interference with its access to Berlin." What then were the "customary" procedures to which the Russians were "accustomed"? How could we blame them if they failed to observe procedures we kept secret from them? These questions were neither raised nor answered. "U.S. convoys have been dismounting their personnel," this dispatch said, "when they numbered more than 30 passengers so it would be easier for the Soviets to check them through, but the Russians were not informed that the

Practically A Soviet Tradition

We don't know who is now the head of the Soviet secret police, but his three predecessors, Yagoda, Yezhov and Beria were each in their turn executed as foreign agents. Objectively speaking, as the Marxist-Leninists like to say, the present man in charge seems to be following in their footsteps. To arrest Prof. Barghoorn just in time to upset the 30th anniversary of the resumption of U.S.-Soviet relations, the wheat sale, and new cultural exchange negotiations was a master stroke. In Stalin's day they would have shot him first and then settled down to investigate whether he was working for the CIA, the Germans or both.

Khrushchev, like Kennedy, seems to suffer from an internal opposition in his own bureaucracy which would like to trip up better Russian-American relations. We applaud the quick release of Prof. Barghoorn, and the firm stand by the President which brought it about. We believe that every blow against the Soviet secret police system is a blow for peace and a favor to the people of the Soviet Union. We hope a new cultural exchange will be made contingent on a promise to activate at last that clause in the Roosevelt-Litvinov recognition agreement which promised that when any American was arrested in Russia our authorities would be notified and given a chance to see him "without delay." We still remember the ugly way Anna Louise Strong was arrested in Moscow as a spy.

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U.S. had decided on 30 as the dividing line."

Clay's "Counter-Erosion" Strategy

To keep the U.S. regulations secret from the Russians was asking for trouble, especially on so sensitive a highway as the autobahn to Berlin. Indeed, if this were the whole truth, one wondered why there have not been more incidents in the past over refusal to dismount. The Allied military traffic on this autobahn is very heavy. "The total number of vehicles moving each way on the autobahn," said a special story in the London *Sunday Times* (Nov. 1), "average nearly 30,000 a year; of these roughly 18,000 are American, 9,000 British and 1,000 French." Checking procedures have developed over the years, "based on the Russians' admitted right to be satisfied that road vehicles are carrying Allied traffic." The Russians were told how many men were in each convoy and left to check this as best they could. The practice of dismounting to facilitate a head count began in August 1961 after a 1500-man battle group on its way to Berlin in the crisis atmosphere created by the erection of the Wall dismounted to speed up its clearance. Thereafter the custom seems to have become general as a convenient way to facilitate clearance. Gen. Clay when he got to Berlin in September (see the Associated Press backgrounder, *Washington Star* Nov. 9; *Washington Post* Nov. 10) seems to have felt however that this new practice of dismounting represented an "erosion process" which was wearing away Allied rights on the autobahn. The Associated Press story suggests that on his urging there then began a counter process. "This was the beginning," the AP said, "of the British and American tactic of dismounting troops of larger convoys but not when relatively few men were involved." For a clearer picture of this "counter erosion" process one must turn to a revealing article by a former Army officer who was stationed in Berlin and is close to Gen. Clay, Jean Edward Smith, writing in *The Reporter* for Nov. 21. This was the strategy Clay suggested, according to Smith:

"Instead of a refusal to dismount, the response should be varied: First, a few small convoys with only drivers should be sent through. These need not dismount since their numbers could be ascertained easily. The size of the convoys not dismounting could be gradually increased. Simultaneously, however, larger convoys should make this trip and—as usual—should line up for the Soviet head count. In other words, the Russians were to be kept guessing, the size of the convoys not, dismounting would get larger and larger until finally the precedent had been eroded. The success of this maneuver clearly depended on the Russians' not realizing what was happening. . . . This, then, was the situation when the first incident occurred last month. We were still nibbling away at the precedent set in August, 1961; and the U.S. garrison in Berlin, taking advantage of the growing detente, elected to try the issue once more on October 10.

So, according to this account, the incidents were precipitated by the U.S. military, taking advantage of the thaw, as an attempt to "nibble away" at Soviet rights of inspection, not the other way around, as our press presented it. Smith says the idea of dismounting only if the number of combat troops exceeded 30, without counting drivers or assistant drivers, "was not a standing practice." He says it was worked out in negotiations with the Russians. Indeed it was not devised, he writes, until "Friday afternoon, October 11, as a means for extricating the convey held at Babelsberg, and subsequently was imposed on the U.S. Berlin command from Washington." According to Smith, "the first time the people in authority in Berlin learned of the formula was when they saw it in the papers," and "they were subsequently ordered to comply."

What is Smith's authority and what are his sources? This former Army officer is now Faculty Scholar of Public Law and Government at Columbia. His new book, "The Defense

An Invitation to Trouble

"The vagueness of arrangements for inspecting military convoys to and from Berlin is an invitation to trouble as well as to genuine misunderstanding. The Americans have been in the habit of dismounting passengers if their number exceeded 30 excluding drivers and co-drivers. The British set the figures a little higher. There is no ruling on the number of vehicles or the density of their passengers, and no standard practice among the western powers themselves. It is therefore as difficult for the Russians to know whether something new is being tried out on them as it is for the Western powers to know whether they are being subjected to deliberate harassment. The Russians can help repair the impression they have made by joining a sensible agreement on the subject."

—Editorial in The Times of London Oct. 17, the morning after a British convoy to Berlin was held up.

How A Leading Pentagon Sob Sister Whooped the Story Up

"Washington—Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei A. Gromyko, for the second time in a year, has been the centerpiece of treacherous October tidings pushing the U.S. and Russia into an eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation that could lead to conflict.

"President Kennedy, aids said, is furious and determined not to be the first to blink in the crisis over the blockade of an American convoy on the Berlin Autobahn. The President, it is reliably learned, has taken personal charge. . . .

"President Kennedy began the effort to convey to Moscow the seriousness of the situation by making a protest to Mr. Gromyko during a White House visit Thursday. During and after the White House meeting, Mr. Gromyko exuded sweetness and light in the pattern of last October.

"It has been standard operational procedure in Berlin for the Russians to try to take advantage of periods of detente to extend their authority a little in the expectation that American desire for a Cold War breather would motivate the U.S. to look the other way. There have been occasions in the early 1950s when it worked This time the Soviets miscalculated. . . .

"Mr. Kennedy has committed his prestige to a policy of detente and getting along with the Russians. Now the Russians are pulling the rug from under him for all the world to see.

"Is the wheat deal at stake? Is the detente at stake? said a top official: 'The Russian people have been hungry before. If the Russians thought they could take advantage of the situation to get a stranglehold on Berlin—and control of American troop movements would give them that stranglehold—they wouldn't let a wheat deal stand in the way. What we have to convey to the Russians is that there is a lot more at stake than the wheat deal. What is at stake is war and peace'?"

—Marguerite Higgins, New York Herald-Tribune, Oct. 12.

That unnamed top official—could he possibly be Lt. Gen. William E. Hall, U.S. Air Force, recently retired, this newslady warrior's husband?

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of Berlin," claims to be based in part on exclusive interviews with General Clay. It takes a hard line on the German question and is critical of President Kennedy and the New Frontiersmen for seeking fresh approaches to the German problem and abandoning the intransigent positions of the Adenauer-Dulles period. It pictures an "anti-Clay axis" at work in Washington. Rusk, Stevenson, Rostow, Schlesinger and Bohlen are all mentioned unfavorably and the President's proposal for a Berlin access authority is pictured as appeasement. The book is written as a defense of General Clay's position, as is *The Reporter* article.

Too Close to Shooting for Comfort

The defense of Clay by Smith in *The Reporter* illustrates the risks incurred by the probing operation of October 10. Smith writes that "General Clay emphasized gradualness and flexibility." Smith criticizes the October 10 probe. "The requisite finesse was lacking," he writes. "Under the Clay formula, flexibility was an essential ingredient." Smith says that "when it appeared that the Soviets were going to balk, as soon became evident, the convoy should have dismounted before the issue was joined. As it was the convoy commander—acting under orders which were far too rigid—refused to give in, and national prestige was involved." Smith said that General Clay in Berlin "chose his issues with incomparable skill, and in no case placed himself in the position where the U.S. would bear the responsibility for firing the first shot." Unfortunately, Smith continues, in his analysis for *The Reporter*, "the first autobahn incident was not so carefully selected. For if the Soviets had not decided to allow our convoy through we would have had no choice but to shoot or dismount. And no one has ever assumed that the U.S. should go to war over the reluctance of soldiers to dismount." We seem to have come very close to that, however, in the autobahn incidents.

Smith's sources in West Berlin seem to have felt differently about this. The fact that the Soviets gave in and let the first two convoys proceed without dismounting from Marienborn, made it look as if the risk had paid off. "In West Berlin at that time," Smith writes, "the military assumed that the U.S. had scored a cold-war victory."

Our military had, in fact, chalked up two cold victories. One was over the Russians. The other, which Smith only touches on in another context, was over Kennedy. For as Smith says in describing the situation when the original convoy was held up the second time at the other end of the autobahn outside Berlin late on the night of the 10th, "President Kennedy undoubtedly was in an uncomfortable position that night. He had firmly, perhaps irrevocably, committed himself to an election campaign based on peace and prosperity, and on improving relations with Russia. Perhaps the Soviets even shared this desire, but now, because of incidents not really designed by either side [but Smith had just finished saying they were designed by the U.S. military!—IFS], the whole accord—to say nothing of Mr. Kennedy's campaign pitch—seemed to be drifting away."

It is a pity the Berlin military cannot be called before a Congressional investigating committee and asked who authorized this probing operation, and who picked the day when the nuclear test ban treaty was to be formalized and Gromyko was again to be at the White House. The coincidence, the unleashing of a new cold war atmosphere, remind one of the U-2 flight scheduled just in time to disrupt the Paris conference.

Smith criticizes the October 10th operation for lack of flexibility. If the purpose was not so much to set a new precedent on the autobahn as to poison the atmosphere against further negotiations, rigidity was useful. Few Americans realize how carefully planned the incidents of October 10th were and the risks incurred. Once the Russians refused to let the convoy pass, contingency plans were put into effect which might easily have escalated. Let us notice first that two convoys met at the Marienborn checkpoint and refused to dismount. One was eastbound to Berlin, the other was westbound from Berlin; the latter, the larger one, with 73 men in 25 vehicles, had passed through the checkpoint outside Berlin without incident. Presumably its men had dismounted It was essential for this convoy to reach Marienborn without delay in order to make a joint stand there with the incoming convoy *because the first step in the contingency plan was to block all traffic on the autobahn.* This required large con-

Perfectly Reasonable

Berlin—U.S. Major Gen. James H. Polk, the man who must make the big decisions in this divided city, quickly put the latest U.S. Soviet crisis over Berlin access rights in perspective yesterday. "They are trying to make the point that they are the ones who are calling the shots on the autobahn," the American Berlin commander said. "We are determined that they will not make it. I can't predict what will happen," he added grimly. "My only answer is that we are ready for anything and are prepared to cope with it."

Gen. Polk said the Allied procedures are "perfectly reasonable." He added: "A Soviet officer can count the men sitting inside the trucks—if he can count."

—Myron Kandel in the New York Herald-Tribune from Berlin, Nov. 7.

The Enemies of Any Relaxation of Tension Were Jubilant

"One would love to know his name, so one could send him a letter of thanks. Whom? To the man who, in the Kremlin, has fabricated this incident on the Autobahn. Perhaps it was the big chief in person: he merits our gratitude. For he has opportunely reminded us how dangerous a thing is this famous detente [i.e. the relaxation of tension between the U.S. and the USSR]."

—Editorial in Berliner Zeitung, quoted in Le Monde (Paris) Oct. 13-14, as typical of Berlin press reaction.

"An ironic byproduct may be something of a tonic for a host of ills now sapping alliance solidarity. . . . Revival of the Berlin crisis as a live threat to Europe, this reasoning goes, could improve the climate for a number of pending measures for strengthening the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. These include: A broad U.S. backed plan for closer coordination and more equal sharing of the cost of NATO defense; a campaign to prod lagging NATO partners to fulfill their treaty obligations, and a program for a multi-lateral nuclear surface fleet armed with Polaris missiles and manned by mixed crews from a half-dozen or more nations. But if this is indeed the likely upshot of renewed Berlin tension, what's in it for Mr. Khrushchev?"

—Wall St. Journal, Nov. 6.

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voys in both lanes. This was the first time the U.S. military ever tried this, and it might have led to serious trouble. The fact that all traffic was blocked was only disclosed two days later at a press conference in Berlin (see *New York Times,* Oct. 13), where it was described as "a successful bid to break the first Soviet attempt to detain the troops."

How We Blocked the Autobahn

The spokesman at the press conference boasted that within an hour the Russians processed and released both convoys. Whether this was because of the road block or because of messages from Gromyko in Washington to Moscow is not known. When the Berlin-bound convoy reached the other end of the autobahn three or four hours later, it was again held up for refusal to dismount. Here again a similar double play seems to have been prepared. A second convoy headed for West Germany had already been cleared through the checkpoint. It was made up of 164 men on 26 vehicles, and it had no trouble clearing, presumably because its men dismounted to be counted. But it did not move on; it waited for the inbound convoy (*New York Times,* Oct. 13, p.3 col. 4). This meant that again there were large convoys in both lanes, one already cleared in the westbound lane, the other newly halted in the eastbound lane where it had refused to dismount for counting. The two convoys were again in position to block all traffic in both directions.

An even more risky ploy seems to have been used in this second encounter. According to the *New York Times* (Oct. 12) from Berlin "Shortly before noon yesterday, [i.e. Friday the 11th], the Army ordered Lieutenant Fields [who was in command of the Berlin-bound convoy] to test Moscow's intentions by raising the barriers at the Babelsberg checkpoint in an attempt to get away without permission. The Soviet officer in charge then moved up two armored personnel carriers with 50 soldiers to block the autobahn." What if Lt. Fields had been shot when he raised the barrier and tried to go through without permission? This was a dangerous place to play games but the Russians backed down again, and on the 12th the convoy was allowed to proceed without dismounting. But in the meantime the cold warriors had had their inning. The *New York Herald-Tribune* under banner headlines the morning of Oct. 12 spoke of another eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation (see box p. 2) and suddenly Major Gen. James H. Polk, U.S. Commandant in Berlin, was being called "No Nonsense" Polk. This publicity buildup might have

Soviet Press Release on Nov. Incident

"On 4 November a U.S. military convoy consisting of 12 vehicles refused to submit to the customary control at the Soviet crossing and checkpoint in Marienborn. It did not proceed on its scheduled route from the German Federal Republic to West Berlin. The officer in charge of the convoy, who produced documents pertaining to the trucks and the U.S. military personnel travelling in them, declared that he could not parade his military personnel; nor could he give orders to open the sides of the trucks for checking the military personnel shown in the documents. He added that he would be relieved of his command if he did this. The conduct of the military personnel in this instance distinctly departed from the rules governing the passing of U.S. military personnel through Soviet crossing and checkpoints previously observed by U.S. military convoys.

"The reference by the Americans to instructions issued among the U.S. troops in Germany and which violate the rules laid down, of course, cannot have any validity for Soviet crossing and checkpoints. At the conference of the commanders-in-chief of the allied powers on June 1945 it was clearly laid down that 'Soviet troops will guard, patrol (kommandodienst) and regulate traffic on the roads mentioned.' For many years no complication arose in this connection at the crossing and checkpoints. The rules governing the passing of military personnel and supplies of the three powers through crossing and checkpoints are known to the American military authorities. The incident created by the convoy in question has thus been clearly artificially created by the U.S. military authorities guided by some erroneous considerations."

—From Nov. 6 statement by Soviet press officer at Marienborn, as broadcast by East Berlin radio that day.

What Khrushchev Actually Said to the Visiting U. S. Businessmen

MR. JAMES H. BINGER, president, Honeywell Regulator Co.: We were all very happy to learn this morning that the American convoy blocked on the road to Berlin had been allowed to proceed. Could you tell us why it was stopped?

MR. KHRUSHCHEV: A certain procedure has been fixed for the control of allied military units using the Berlin autobahn. Every time that military personnel of American, English or French units have respected this procedure, they have been allowed to pass. When they have not respected it, they have been held up, and it will always be so.

As soon as the American officers allowed the procedure utilized for years, they were authorized to proceed. There was no reason why the American soldiers had to stay blocked for two days. In fact, I was surprised that they were able to stay so long in their trucks. They must have hidden resources. But that is an internal problem in which I do not wish to interfere.

It is difficult to say what would have happened if the customary procedure had not finally been respected. Perhaps neither you nor I would be here today. We would certainly not have given in and it would have been necessary to pass over our corpses. It is you who provoked this incident. For our part, we want no tension of this kind.

MR. RICHARD CLURMAN, chief of correspondents, Time-Life: Do you mean to say that if there had not been an agreement about procedure, you would have given the order to fire and a war could have resulted?

MR. KHRUSHCHEV: We have given no order of this kind, but a soldier is a soldier. He has his instructions and if someone wants to infringe them by force, it is inevitable that he will resist by force. A soldier is not a Minister of Foreign Affairs. He does not engage in negotiations. He applies his orders. That is a law that applies as much to your soldiers as to ours.

It is clear that you wished to put us to a test of nerves. We responded by placing our armored vehicles across the road in order to test your nerves and see whether you would shoot or not. You did not do it, and we are very happy about that.

A VOICE: But what rule did they violate?

MR. KHRUSHCHEV: As for that, I advise you to ask your Ambassador, Mr. Kohler.

—November 6 interview with U.S. business men arranged by Time-Life. Translated from L'Express (Paris, Nov. 14) the only place where we found the text available.

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cost the rest of us dearly.

The crazy comedy was repeated, this time by the British on October 16. On that day the Russians held up a British convoy of nine trucks and 28 officers and men for nine hours at the Babelsberg checkpoint after they refused to dismount for counting. The Russians finally waved them through but three hours later, at the other end of the autobahn in Marienborn, they were again held up for three hours. Again the Russians gave in. Here again the same strange numbers game took place. According to the *Times* of London (Oct. 17) "The British procedure, which the Russians have previously accepted, has been that troops should get out only when the number of men is above a certain figure—which is not being disclosed because it is felt it would become a bargaining point for the Russians—or if the number of men in any one vehicle exceeds a certain number."

Almost Gilbert & Sullivan

Not only were the British pursuing the same tactics as the Americans in not telling the Russians what the magic number was at which convoys would dismount, but the British number seemed to be different from the Americans. For next day, the Russians passed four British convoys without trouble. The *Times* of London reported (Oct. 18), "The Russians this time appeared to be conciliatory. According to the British understanding of the procedure they were entitled to ask all the men to leave their vehicles, as the convoys each consisted of about 60 men. *They left only those vehicles, however, where the number exceeded the established figure.*" Apparently the British, unlike the Americans, had two sets of numbers, one for the total number in the convoy, the other for the number in each vehicle. The *Times* in an editorial (see box at top of col. 2 on our page 2) seemed to think this might breed a dangerous confusion, and its diplomatic correspondent (Oct. 18) said the Allies were in consultation on the problem. He reached almost Gilbert & Sullivan heights in explaining the situation. After saying that a Foreign Office spokesman had said he believed the Allied position was "perfectly understood" by the Russians, the Diplomatic Correspondent went on to say—

The fact is, however, that the normal practice of each of the western allies—in leaving vehicles to be counted, for instance, if the number of men in the convoy is considerable—have never been exactly stated to the Russians, because the allies claim full and unrestricted access as their right, and wish to avoid any implication that their normal and well recognized practices, which have grown up for convenience, cannot be varied. Clearly the Allies would not put forward to the Russians an alteration of their rights. If, however, misunderstandings of their normal practices can lead to serious incidents, there is a case for making clear the sort of procedure which they are each, normally, prepared to accept.

This would seem to reserve the right for the Allies to act abnormally, or eccentrically, when they so choose, leaving the Russian checkers to decide whether to shoot, wave them through, or summon a psychiatrist.

As a result of these doubts, the Western allies proceeded to draw up common rules and presented them to the Russians on Oct. 29. This led to new confusion because the British customarily lowered the tailboards on their vehicles to make it easier for the Soviet checkpoint officer to count the men in them. "The Americans," according to the London *Times* (Nov. 8), "whose tailboards were lower, and therefore less of a hindrance to checking, refused to lower them." The French had no tailboard problem, since they normally send their troops to Berlin by rail anyway. A compromise was finally reached; tailboards were to be lowered if over 6 feet. "The Russians were not consulted on the memorandum" ac-

They Know, But We Don't

Berlin—Perhaps a Martian newspaper will report some day that humanity was obliterated from the Earth after an American soldier refused to drop his tail gate. If his readers are puzzled, they will be no worse off than the Earthling outsiders who try to follow the intricacies of the international debate over Berlin. . . .

Unfortunately the terms under which the Americans and British and French will dismount never have been made public. Everyone knows that 30 troops riding as passengers are a magic number; above 30, dismount; 30 or less, no.

But the formula is more complicated than that. Its details are a Western military secret known only to the Russians, the East bloc countries and possibly the Red Chinese.

—Henry L. Trewhitt, the Baltimore Sun's correspondent in Germany, Nov. 10.

New Yorker Suggests The Berlin Incidents May Be A New Form of Bloodless Combat

". . . Then the Russians shifted their demands, and asked that the tailgates of the trucks be lowered, so that our troops could be counted while remaining inside. Again we refused—not because Western troops always refuse to lower their tailgates but because Allied rules call for such lowering only when tailgates are more than six feet high. In this case, as we told the Russians, the tailgates were less than three feet high, and on this firm mathematical ground we drew the line and took our stand. Once again the Russians changed their demands, and asked that the American troops stand inside the trucks to facilitate a head count. This was going too far. Without even bothering to work out the mathematical justification, we took our stand and remained seated. However, as the Times reported the next day, our soldiers 'climbed off their trucks repeatedly to eat, sleep and relax' during the long ordeal, and this gave the alert Khrushchev the basis for his misleading 'victory' statement.

"All this may still seem a little confusing until one realizes that both superpowers—apparently convinced that a nuclear war would leave neither victor nor spoils—have devised a substitute form of combat, which produces headlines but no casualties, and provides precisely the same number of victors as there are participants. The very pettiness of the argument adds a safety element. Who ever heard of two superpowers going to war over three feet of tailgate? Perhaps the best analogy is to a certain social ritual that most people have participated in, or at least observed, during their formative years. The ritual consists of two small boys' standing toe to toe on an imaginary line, surrounded by an audience of their peers, and challenging each other to step over the line. Sometimes there's a bit of pushing and shoving, but almost always the crisis ends without bloodshed. Almost always. At least 9 times out of 10."

—The New Yorker: Talk of The Town, Nov. 16.

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cording to the London *Times* "as the essence of the Western position is that they have unrestricted right of access and agree to certain procedures as a matter of general convenience." At the same time, according to this London *Times* "Guide to Incidents on Berlin Access Routes" (Nov. 8), the Western memorandum was not published. "The Western allies," the diplomatic correspondent of the Times said, "preferred not to establish a clear-cut position in public which might make it harder for the Russians to withdraw in case of dispute." Another motive may have been not to embarrass the Russians unduly by making it appear that the West was dictating traffic regulations for the autobahn. If so this was upset by a leak to the press. "Unfortunately," Neal Acherson, Berlin correspondent of The London *Observer* revealed in his paper (Nov. 10), "this action was leaked by a West Berlin Senate official to visiting American journalists. It looked as if the Russians were taking Allied instructions about how to run the autobahn. Possibly, as a direct result, the American convoy was stopped at Marienborn." This was a reference to the incident of Nov. 4 to which we now turn.

A New Set of Rules

According to the London *Times* account of Nov. 8 quoted above the Nov. 4 incident was the result of a deliberate test. "No acceptance of the Western memorandum having been received for five days," the *Times* reported, "the U.S. government, which had a convoy due to leave Berlin sent it off in 12 vehicles with 44 men in all—i.e. fewer than 30 passengers, if drivers and co-drivers are excluded—a form deliberately chosen to test whether the Russians accepted the procedure announced in the memorandum." This memorandum represented a new stage in the autobahn troubles. Earlier the U.S. was trying to whittle away the custom of dismounting large convoys. Now they were presenting the Russians with a new set of rules for the autobahn under their control. Five days seems a rather short time to wait for a response to so basic a precedent. For if the West fears a whittling away of its rights on the autobahn, so does the East. Certainly this picture is different from that conveyed to newspapermen by the State Department on Nov. 4, that the Russians were trying to change practices which had existed for many years.*

Checkers Not Allowed to Check?

"Sir—Am I the only one who is puzzled by the latest installment of the Berlin crisis? There seems to be general agreement that Russian checkpoints exist, presumably for the purpose of checking, and that we do recognize that they have some right to know how many allied servicemen proceed to or from Berlin, although the Russians did not usually bother with counting small numbers.

"The three Western powers informed the Russians about the number of troops which they have a right to send past the checkpoint without the Russians counting them. Two questions immediately arise.

"The first is that no checking authority could possibly concede the principle that it must always take the word of those checked about their own numbers. It must reserve the right occasionally to see whether they are telling the truth.

"Secondly, and more important, the Soviet cannot possibly concede the principle that the checking procedure, their procedure, can be determined by the unilateral declaration of the Western powers. To all intents and purposes we compelled them to act. Having done so, we sound the alarm, talk of 'blockade' and speculate about their far-reaching motives. What is the point of all this?"

—Letter in The Times of London Nov. 11 by A. Nove, Dept. of International Economic Studies, University of Glasgow.

* The formal protest note of Nov. 6 got around this by

Those Russians Just Don't Understand Good Old Teamster Union Practices

We keep having these tieups on the autobahn to West Berlin. Mr. Khrushchev says any one of them could lead to a nuclear holocaust and the end of civilization. True. But fear not. Neither side will ever yield.

As you know, the Russians get to check every convoy of troops we send over the autobahn to West Berlin. And if there's more than 30 passengers in the trucks, they have to get out, line up and be counted. A typical cold war agreement. Very simple. Theoretically.

But take the last tie-up. Along come 12 United States trucks. "Stop" says the Russian colonel. And he peeks inside. "Aha!" he says, "you've got one, two, three, four, five . . . 44 soldiers in those trucks. That's more than 30. Now that I've counted them, they've got to get out and get counted."

"Hold it" says the American colonel. "You counted the drivers, too. Drivers don't count."

"So, okay," says the Russian colonel, "we don't count the drivers. You've got one, two, three . . . 12 trucks. Twelve trucks, 12 drivers. Twelve from 44 that's let's see, 32. Hah! Everybody out!"

"Hold it!" says the American colonel. "We got 24 drivers. Count them for yourself. Those 24 in the front seats are drivers and those 20 in the back seats are passengers. What's the matter, can't you count?"

"You mean it takes two drivers to drive one truck?" says the Russian.

"Right," says the American. "One steers and the other lights his cigarettes, wipes the windshield, scratches his back and hollers 'Look out!' when necessary. Just like the Teamsters Union. It is, sir, the American way!"

"Bah!" says the Russian colonel. "I am checking with Moscow." So he does.

"Don't back down!" cries Moscow. And rushes up reinforcements.

"Don't back down!" cries Washington. And rushes up reinforcements.

All Soviet forces are alerted. All United States forces are alerted. NATO is alerted. Rockets presumably swivel ominously into position. France and Britain cry, "Don't back down!" And rush up reinforcements. To defend America's inalienable right to have two drivers in every truck.

Forty-two hours pass. Personally, I don't know how World War II was averted. Because both sides claim they didn't back down. But 42 hours is a long time to sit in a truck.

Well, whatever, I'm glad we didn't blow up civilization. This time.

But don't get me wrong. I'm sure we're all willing to die for our right to have two drivers in every truck. Just as all Russians are willing to die for the egalitarian principle of one truck, one driver. Moreover, if you're looking for a reason to destroy civilization, it's as good as any. If you're looking for a reason.

—Arthur Hoppe, Washington Star, Nov. 12.

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The Nov. 4 incident was carefully prepared from the Western side, and apparently, unlike the Oct. 10, with full knowledge of higher quarters. The *Baltimore Sun* reported from Berlin Nov. 6 that the Nov. 4 convoy was "the first direct challenge" since Oct. 10, "All American convoys since then have been formed in such a manner that they would dismount under their own rules." The knife-edge issue drawn was neatly phrased by the *Baltimore Sun's* correspondent in Berlin (Nov. 11) when he said, "The Russians say that they have to count the soldiers moving over the road. The Western allies agree but they decide what arrangements are made for counting them." The same dispatch threw further light on the argument when it said, "The Russians complain that they cannot see to count men inside a dark truck."

Russian Compromises Rejected

The Russians seem to have met the "crisis" by offering to compromise. If the men would not dismount, they asked that our men lower the tailgates for counting. When this was refused, they asked if the men in the truck would stand up to be counted. This was also rejected. These offers to compromise were described by Allied spokesmen in a belligerant and arrogant manner. They said (*Baltimore Sun*, Nov. 6) that "during the last two days, three separate and entirely arbitrary demands were made by Soviet authorities to change existing procedures. These were: demand to dismount; to lower tailgates, and for personnel to stand in the trucks to be counted. All were flatly rejected by U.S. authorities." Since we recognize the Russians' right to count and check the numbers against the convoy papers, this seems a very chip-on-the-shoulder attitude.**

How East Germany Saw It

"Cold war propagandists had a field day early in October, when they tried to play up a procedural difference on the West Berlin border into an 'international crisis'. . . . The conditions for the use of this motor highway by military transports have never been clearly defined in international agreements; a confused, and confusing, series of precedents have grown up since 1945, and arguments between American convoy officers and Soviet guards have recurred at irregular intervals over the past 18 years. . . .

"Observers in Bonn stated that there was some indication that the incident had been provoked by local American commanders, in cooperation with West German militarist circles, to upset the present tendency towards relaxation in the German question.

"It was pointed out in Berlin [i.e. East Berlin—IFS] that the incident showed how important it is for the powers concerned to conclude a proper detailed agreement on the legal status of West Berlin and its communication routes. Until such an agreement is reached, minor local differences can be used by anti-relaxation forces to create a major incident."

—Democratic German Report Oct. 18, a fortnightly published in East Berlin by the British journalist, John Peet, Krausenstrasse 9, Berlin W 8, an unofficial organ of the East German regime's point of view.

It is as if our military were spoiling for a fight. The convoy was blocked at Marienborn 9 a.m. local time Nov. 4. "At midnight," the UPI reported (New York *Daily News*, Nov. 5), "the convoy suddenly moved out without Soviet permission. It rolled about a quarter of a mile past two road barriers but was blocked about 400 yards inside East Germany as Soviet armored cars and five trucks, presumably laden with troops, rolled up to stop it. . . . West German truck drivers who passed through the checkpoint reported that the armored cars carried mounted machine guns." This effort to crash the border was made, according to the *Baltimore Sun* account, (Nov. 5) "apparently after a midnight deadline set by the U.S." It was this which brought about that danger of shooting and war to which Khrushchev referred in his interview with the U.S. business men (see box bottom of p. 4).

some ingenious wording. It said that in stopping the convoy the Russians were acting "in contradiction with the established procedures followed up to the present time by the Allies. The pertinent procedures currently in effect were communicated by the 3 governments to the Soviet military authorities last Oct. 29." So the rules had been in effect all of 8 days!

**** Compare the statement made by the new British Prime Minister while the convoy was still being held. He said that "so far as he knew there was nothing sinister about the dispute in the Berlin corridor. . . . 'The dispute is about the opening of tailboards on the vehicles which carry the troops to and from Berlin'." (The London Times, Nov. 6.)**

"Our Tailboards Are Our Bulwarks Against Communism"

(The dramatic inside story of the Marienborn crisis, as related by Major-General Sir Roderick Talltrouser, Deputy-Director of Western Face, in a specially written new instalment of his memoirs, "Forty Years of Saving It.")

MARIENBORN! Throughout the annals of the free world the name will ring like a clarion call. Whenever they hear it, men will lift their heads proudly and say:—"Our tailboards were never lowered!"

The truth is that for 41 hours the Americans remained in their lorries on the autobahn and valiantly refused all Russian requests for co-operation in counting them. They refused to dismount. They refused to stand up. They refused to lower their tailboards.

As soon as we at Face H.Q. were informed of the American's position, we sent out a British and a French convoy as relieving forces, with strict instructions to remain seated and keep their tailboards up at all costs. The Russians, I regret to say, took this as the opportunity to play a particularly dirty trick on the American commander. They told him that at Babelsberg, at the other end of the autobahn, the French had, in fact, lowered their tailboards.

Fortunately, he refused to believe it. "What?" he must have said to himself. "Is it likely that the French, who did not lower their eagles at Austerlitz or Borodino, have lowered their tailboards at Babelsberg?"

The views of my American and French colleagues and myself, I may say, were in the closest harmony throughout the crisis. At one joint stag meeting the warm emotional tone rose to such a pitch that I became somewhat carried away. I stood up and sang to the assembled Western officers: "British tailboards never, never will be lowered."

At this, I am proud to say, there was applause, and my French colleagues jumped up and declared: "Ils ne baisseront pas!" The senior American general present added: "Be assured, gentlemen, that when the time comes to stand up and be counted, we will sit down and refuse to be counted." It was truly a moving moment.

—Michael Frayn, London Observer, Nov. 10.

IFS to Speak for Peace in Vietnam 8 p.m. Dec. 5 at Palm Gardens, 310 W. 52nd St., New York City, under Auspices of Studies on the Left

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Khrushchev was not the only one who saw grave possibilities in the confrontation, though these possibilities were not advertised by U.S. military spokesmen until after the crisis had passed. Thus Myron Kandel from Berlin in the *New York Herald-Tribune* (Nov. 6) after the convoy was released said Allied officials had been meeting in Bonn and Berlin on next steps to be taken under their contingency plans and "Officials have confided privately that invoking some of these measures runs the risk of East-West bloodshed." The *Baltimore Sun's* correspondent (Nov. 7) said "evidence grew to indicate that the autobahn incident came nearer the point of explosion than anyone has admitted publicly." Earlier the *New York Herald-Tribune* (Nov. 5) had reported from Washington that the government's reaction to the new holdup "was one of studied calm. . . . Officials said there was a detailed contingency plan that had been worked out well in advance with the British, the French and the Germans, 'It's quite a bag of tricks'," an unnamed official was quoted as saying. Both the *Herald Tribune* and the *Wall St. Journal* drew a parallel with the Cuban crisis, the latter saying (Nov. 6) after it was over that the "latest Russian blockade became, in its way, almost as flagrant and frightening a test of Western will as the Soviet move to slip missiles into Cuba."

More Trouble May Lie Ahead

Fortunately the Nov. 4 convoy in one crucial detail had different orders from that of Oct. 10. The men in the latter were not allowed to dismount even to answer the calls of nature. In the case of the former "There was no lack of opportunity to count the men," the *New York Times* reported (Nov. 7), "for they showed themselves freely in periodic moments of relaxation and for a night time bivouac at the side of the road." This allowed the Russians a face-saver. They could claim that they had counted the men in accordance with their normal procedures. These counting procedures obviously are not limited to dismounting. As one U.S. official told the *Washington Star* afterwards (Nov. 6) "It's quite obvious that their procedures are quite flexible." That's more than can be said for ours.

But what happens next time? Nothing has been settled. What if next time U.S. troops stay in their trucks and cannot be counted? What if a dispute arises as to whether there are 30 or 31 passengers? "This argument has not yet been settled," a Western official told the Associated Press in Berlin (*Baltimore Sun,* Nov. 11). "Our plans are based on the expectation of more trouble in the near future." Major Gen. James H. Polk our commander in Berlin told the *Baltimore Sun* (Nov. 7), "We are ready for any type incident." Its correspondent said, "Neither Polk nor John A. Calhoun, chief of the U.S. mission, appeared to be optimistic that further incidents could be avoided." Polk's attitude may be gathered from his statement at press conference in the same dispatch when he said he would "not submit our troops to degradation and harassment." Why was it suddenly degradation to allow themselves to be counted standing up instead of sitting down?

If the Nov. 4 orders had not left a loophole for counting, if the Russians had not backed down, if shooting had started from either side when the convoy crashed the barrier, a World War might have been precipitated. Berlin is the neuralgic nerve of East-West confrontation. As serious as the light-minded way such great risks were taken over such picayune issues was the way the whole affair was misrepresented by U.S. press and officials.

Bonn Was Pleased

Bonn, Nov. 9—A measure of wry satisfaction was evident in Bonn this week as officials followed efforts of the U.S. to extricate one of its military convoys from a Soviet blockade on the Berlin autobahn.

Unlike Washington, Bonn had no doubt from the moment a previous U.S. convoy was held up a month ago that Premier Khrushchev had chosen deliberately to squeeze the West where it hurt. When the Soviet's authorities set in motion a conflict that could conceivably escalate into world war, West German officials are certain that no room is left for "local misunderstandings."

From the point of view of West Germany, the Soviet leader has thus performed a useful service. Even the most pro-American officials in Bonn have been troubled in recent months by what they regard as an imprudent dream in Washington that the intractable problems of Germany and Berlin could be at least temporarily by-passed in a drive for detente with the Soviet world.

—New York Times Sunday Review Section, Nov. 10.

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